

Holding Space, Advent IV

This liturgy (worship service), was crafted by a small group of individuals who were part of a larger group of Lay Worship Leaders who gathered to learn about EPIC (Experiential, Participatory, Inclusive/Image Rich, and Connective) worship leadership, reflect on the theme of **holding space** in Advent, and collectively prepare for the season.

Based on the readings of the Revised Common Lectionary for Year B, the resource offers prayers and hymn suggestions, and, as time and energy permitted, reflection ideas. Where the authors have used or adapted material written by others, credit is offered at the bottom of the document. The left-hand column identifies the portion of the liturgical element. The middle column contains the words that may be shared. Spoken text for one voice is in regular font. The text for many voices is in **bold** font. Text that is to be shared in unison or responsively is offered in sense lines. The right-hand column offers any guidance for participation or movement.

This resource is offered to you as a gift by all of those who had a hand in preparing it. You are encouraged to adapt it for use in ways that fit your context, with the prayer that it may assist you in creating and **holding space** for hope, peace, joy and love to enter.



Liturgical Element	Content	Guidance
Prior to the service	Have the ushers pass out pieces of straw to those entering for worship.	
Word of Welcome	My friends, Emmanuel is promised to us. We hold space in our hearts for the blessed event. We gather to prepare.	
Candle Lighting Litany ¹	Come gather in the light. The light of HOPE (light first candle) The light of PEACE (light second candle) The light of JOY (light third candle) We gather this day as a people of God. Come gather as a people of love!	Perhaps have this done by members of the congregation. One to read the leaders parts, one to help lead the people's (bolder

¹ Lloyd Bruce, FSLDW Regional Minister

	We gather as ones who choose to pause. We gather as ones who choose to hold space. As the time draws near, we open our hearts to the expansive unconditional love that knows no boundaries. We hold space for love, and for one another. We hold space for love to be born anew. We hold space in holy waiting. <i>Fourth candle is lit.</i>	parts), and one to actually light the candles.
Sung Response #90 More Voices (adapted)²	Don't be afraid. through Advent's waiting for love is stronger than our fear. Keep holding space for love to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near.	Ask if there is a congregation member who could play an instrument during the responses.
Gathering Prayer	God with us (Emmanuel), we thank you for all the blessings of this holy season. We come before you in anticipation of the birth of your son, our Redeemer, our Saviour, as foretold by the angel. Open our hearts, minds, senses, our whole selves to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we may worship you with hope, peace, joy and especially love.	

² Jennie Delmotte, Music Director at Sackville United

	Make us aware of the holy mystery that surrounds us. We pray this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.	
Hymn/Song	VU 14: To a Maid Whose Name was Mary	Use a faster tempo than what is normally employed. If there is a liturgical dancer this would be lovely to add;.
Invitation to Confession	Let us come before God as we acknowledge our falling short of God's expectations.	
Prayer of Confession	Blessed Lord, we admit that we haven't always been faithful to the commands you expect of us. We haven't always been able to make space in our hearts in our busy lives for what really matters; your love, your peace, and your fellowship to all of God's people. Keep us mindful of the magic and holiness of this season, so that we may be a blessing to all our neighbours, near and far. We ask this in Christ's name, amen.	
Assurance of Grace	Friends, through time immemorial, God has said you will be my people, and I will be your God. God promised a Saviour, and a Saviour was born. Be assured that your sins are forgiven.	
Hymn/Song	MV 79: Spirit, Open my Heart	
Time for All Ages	A talk about preparations for a baby: What do parents today do to get ready for a new baby. Comparatively, what would Mary have had	Have congregants bring these things

	to do. What is a manger, show one. (Bring one) What is swaddling clothes. What was soft for the baby to lie in? Straw is collected and brought up. Maybe they had a blanket on the donkey? (Everything is then arranged) Mary is now ready. Are we ready to receive the Christ Child?	(manger, straw, blanket, cloth etc.) to the front as they are mentioned. The straw that was handed out will then be collected by the children to put in the manger. If there are no kids, pass the straws to the aisle, where it can be collected by the ushers. If there is no Time for All Ages, use the straw at the beginning of the reflection/sermon.
Ancient Wisdom	Luke 1:26-38 and VU 898: Song of Mary (responsive) For the gospel reading you might want to read from “The Message” Or consider reading from a more contemporary version unless your community of faith prefers a more traditional version. In which case you might bring Gabriel’s voice from the Message into your reflection.	Three people reading, one, the narrator, one the voice of the angel, the other the voice of Mary. Perhaps the angel can be a hidden voice.
Modern Wisdom	“An Advent Poem” by John Bell (easy to Google).	Perhaps ask a young congregant to read this. This could be the cover of the bulletin.
Reflection?	Holding space. Mary held space to hear the angel and literally held space within her body to carry the long awaited Messiah. Discuss	

	some of the feelings that Mary might have felt as a young unmarried Woman. Perhaps talk about fear, uncertainty, confusion. How do we hold space to hear and know God? How do our own fears, uncertainty, and confusion and our own busyness prevent us from hearing the word of God? How did Mary respond? How to we respond when God calls us out of our comfort zone? (Try to find some modern day examples of people, perhaps even someone from this community of faith, that have stepped out of their comfort zone to answer God's call). Be sure to conclude with an assurance of God's Loving Grace that reflects love in action.	
Hymn/Song	MV 134: There Was a Child in Galilee (Dreaming Mary)	
Offering prayer	Loving God, with love and hope, we bring our gifts to you. May our act of giving symbolize hope to the world. As we worship you through the Advent journey, may these offerings be blessed to bring love to our work here in (name of community) and your work in the world. Amen.	
Prayers of the People	Holy One, you know the world has so many distractions for us. We don't always hold up the commandment to love one another. It's not because we ignore it on purpose, but because we are busy, or overwhelmed with other needs, especially during this time of year. Draw our attention back to you and back to living in love. (Silence) When the richest amass billions from the work of others, when individuals gather more than they'd ever need, remind us of your way, which doesn't worry about the brightest lights,	Perhaps use a bell or another instrument to signal the start of silent prayer.

	the most beautiful Christmas tree, the biggest gifts, but shares with all, so no-one goes without. (Silence) Receive our prayers today for peace, for love, and for mercy in those places in the world facing war and conflict. [Add specific places that are of special concern to the congregation, and also recognize any important current events]. (Silences) By comparison, our concerns are small, yet they are heavy on our hearts, and you ask us to bring them to you in prayer. And so as your children, we bring you our personal concerns, for ourselves and for others. (Silence) Thank you Compassionate One for loving us, for weeping with us, for rejoicing with us, for never being apart from us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God, who's son Jesus Christ taught us to pray....³	
Prayer of Jesus	God of perfect love, who art in heaven...	
Hymn/Song	VU 509: I the Lord of Sea and Sky	
Commissioning	Mary heard the voice of the angel telling her not to be afraid. We also do not need to be afraid. As we leave this sanctuary, let us hold space for God's word to call to us	

³ Adapted from Whitney Bruno, Little Current and Sheguiandah United Church, Little Current, Ont.

	and lead us to God's way of love for everyone. And our response shall be: Here I Am Lord.	
Benediction	Go now in love. Carry the light of love with you. And may the presence of God uplift you, the gentleness of Christ live in your hearts, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guide you, today and always. ⁴	

Other Possible hymns from Then Let Us Sing: 3 A whisper from the universe, 9 Glory, glory, glory to God, 55 We light this candle, 57 We wait for God

⁴ Adapted from Kim Falls, Bethel Family PC, Omenee, Ont.